

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3427
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, EC
SUBJECT: RECENT GOE FOREIGN POLICY EFFORTS

1. SUMMARY: MEETING FEBRUARY 25 BETWEEN ECUADOREAN JUNTA AND COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT LOPEZ WAS LATEST OF SERIES OF MEETINGS REFLECTING INCREASED INTEREST IN ECUADOR TO MEND FENCES AND IMPROVE ITS REGIONAL POSITION. IMPETUS FOR THIS EFFORT PROBABLY COMES LARGEY FROM INCREASED ECUADOREAN SECURITY FEARS AS RESULT OF PERU ARMS BUILDUP. END SUMMARY.

2. FEBRUARY 25 MEETING BETWEEN ECUADOREAN JUNTA AND COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT LOPEZ WAS MORE NOTABLE FOR THE FACT THAT IT TOOK PLACE AT ALL, RATHER THAN FOR ANY SUBSTANTIVE ACHIEVEMENT. THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE CONTAINED NO SURPRISES, BASICALLY RE-AFFIRMING PREVIOUSLY STATED POSITIONS AND AREAS OF AGREEMENT. WHAT WAS NOTABLE IS THE FACT THAT THE MEETING WAS THE FIRST FOR THE ECUADOREAN JUNTA WITH A FOREIGN CHIEF OF STATE.

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3. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS MEETING WAS ARRANGED ON QUITE SHORT NOTICE AT THE REQUEST OF THE GOE. CRYPTIC PRESS REFERENCES TO SUCH A MEETING BEGAN TO SURFACE HERE IN MID-JANUARY. THE GOE PROBABLY SOUGHT THE MEETING FOR SEVERAL REASONS. FIRST, THE COINCIDENCE OF POINTS OF INTEREST (GEOSYNCHRONOUS ORBIT AND ANDEAN PACT) AND LACK OF DIVISIVE ISSUES MADE A MEETING WITH LOPEZ SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE. SECOND, THE FACT THAT ECUADOR,

ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT IS MILITARY, FEELS MORE AFFINITY FOR ITS DEMOCRATIC NEIGHBORS TO THE NORTH THAN FOR THE MILITARY REGIMES OF THE SOUTHERN CONE. AND THIRD, BECAUSE THE DECEMBER WAR SCARE AND THE PERUVIAN ARMS BUILDUP BROUGHT HOME TO THE GOE THE NEED TO REAFFIRM ITS GOOD RELATIONS WITH COLOMBIA.

4. THE MEETING WITH LOPEZ IS ONLY ONE OF THE EFFECTS THE DECEMBER CRISIS HAS HAD ON THE GOE'S FOREIGN POLICY EFFORTS. AT THE SAME TIME AS IT WAS BEING PREPARED, SIGNIFICANT MEETINGS WERE BEING HELD BY THE GOE WITH CHILE, PERU AND BRAZIL. ON FEBRUARY 23 THE CHILEAN-ECUADOREAN ECONOMIC COORDINATING COMMITTEE MET IN QUITO, IN WHAT IS ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG OF SHARPLY INCREASED CONTACTS BETWEEN THE GOE AND GOC. ON FEBRUARY 17 HIGH-LEVEL GOE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS MET WITH PERUVIAN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ IN LIMA. THAT MEETING WAS HIGHLY PUBLICIZED IN ECUADOR, UNLIKE A SIMILAR MISSION THAT WENT TO LIMA LAST FALL UNDER A CLOAK OF SECRECY. THE LIMA MISSION PROBABLY REPRESENTS AN ATTEMPT BY THE GOE TO LOWER BILATERAL TENSIONS AND GAUGE PERUVIAN INTENTIONS. ALSO THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 17 MFA SUBSECRETARY JOSE AYALA HEADED THE ECUADOREAN DELEGATION TO JOINT ECUADOREAN-BRAZILIAN COMMISSION. ALTHOUGH THE COMMISSION BASICALLY DEALS WITH ECONOMIC ISSUES, AYALA PROBABLY TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE GOE'S SECURITY CONCERNS.

5. COMMENT: THE GOE HAS BEEN LARGELY INACTIVE IN REGIONAL SUMMITRY SINCE THE UNWIELDY JUNTA CAME TO POWER IN JANUARY 1976. THE DECEMBER WAR SCARE BROUGHT HOME TO THE GOE HOW POWERLESS IT IN FACT IS AND HOW MUCH IT WILL DEPEND ON THE GOODWILL
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AND SUPPORT OF THE US AND OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES IN THE EVENT OF A CONFLICT IN THE AREA. THE USG DENIAL OF PERMISSION FOR THE SALE OF THE KFIR UNDERLINED THE NEED FOR THE GOE TO KEEP ITS LATIN AMERICAN FENCES IN ORDER.

6. BOTH THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE SUB-SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS RECENTLY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS MAKING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH PERU, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY EMBARKING ON A DELIBERATE CAMPAIGN TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS WITH OTHER SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES. BETTER RELATIONS WITH OTHER SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES, THEY BOTH IMPLIED, ARE TO COUNTER THE PERUVIAN THREAT. IN PURSUIT OF THIS GOAL, WE EXPECT THE GOE WILL CONTINUE TO TRY TO EXPAND ITS GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT CONTACTS WITH A VARIETY OF LATIN NATIONS IN AN ATTEMPT TO SHORE UP ITS DEFENSE POSITION, IN ADDITION TO ITS PLANS TO SEND HIGH-LEVEL COMMISSIONS TO THE US.
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